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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

# Memorandum



## THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600  
18 April 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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**TOP SECRET**

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18 April 1965

HIGHLIGHTS

Moscow could be setting the stage for a future announcement of the dispatch of Soviet personnel in connection with SAM equipment possibly in transit to North Vietnam. The joint Soviet-DRV communiqué of 17 April was highlighted by a cautious Moscow pledge of volunteers if the DRV requests them.

50X1

In other political developments, the Asian Communists at the Bandung celebration in Indonesia continued their efforts over the week end to line up Afro-Asian support on Vietnam.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:

The pace of Viet Cong activity remained at the same level over the week end, although, government paramilitary forces sustained a large loss of arms in Darlac Province (Para. 1). A government operation in Tay Ninh Province in the wake of the heavy 15 April bombing of Communist War Zone C has had no success to date in contacting the enemy (Para. 3). General Westmoreland reports improved confidence among GVN civilian and military officials, in the delta (Para. 5).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

The Buddhist Institute, which is continuing its quiet anti-Communist campaign, has denied any Buddhist pressure behind the recent removal of two senior military officers (Para. 1). A militant Catholic priest, while dismissing the naval mutiny as an internal service matter, indicates that the Catholics still fear a conspiracy by certain officers and the Buddhists to purge genuine nationalists; he stated, however, that the Catholics plan no early drastic counteraction (Para. 2). South Vietnam's Foreign Ministry is seeking clarification of the remarks in Paris of Deputy Premier Tuyen, who may have contacted some questionable exile circles (Para. 3).

50X1

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III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:  
Preliminary information on the 17 and 18 April air strikes against the DRV indicates that some damage was done to buildings at Mu Gia Pass, and that a string of boxcars along the coastal rail line was attacked (Paras. 1-3).

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50X1

V. Communist Political Developments: The joint Soviet-DRV communiqué of 17 April was highlighted by a cautious pledge to send Soviet volunteers to the DRV if Hanoi requests them. [REDACTED]

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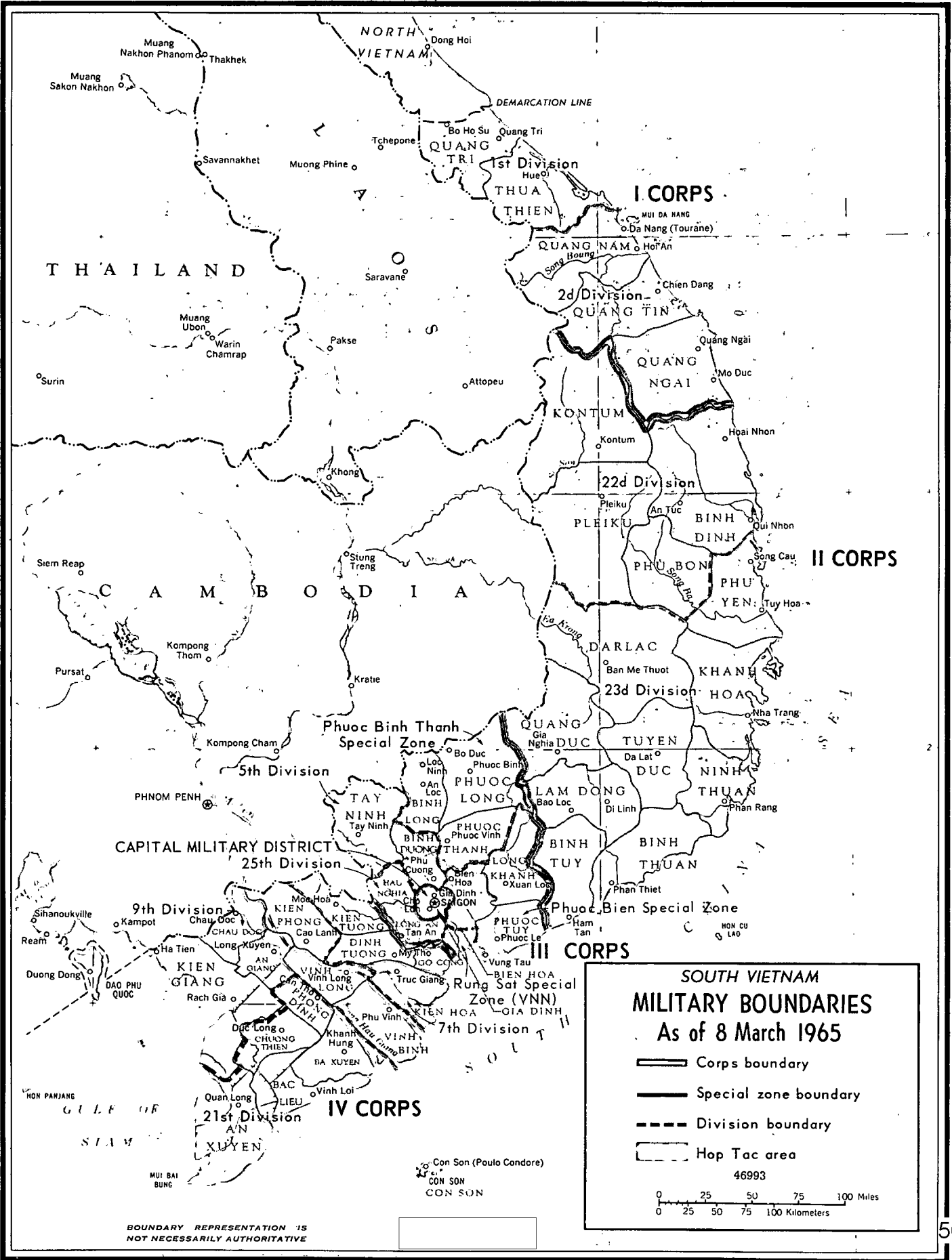
[REDACTED] Over the week end, the Asian Communists continued their efforts to enlist Afro-Asian backing on Vietnam at the Bandung anniversary celebrations in Indonesia (Paras. 7-9). Meanwhile, Pakistani officials have confirmed that the Soviets took a very tough line on Vietnam during President Ayub's recent visit to Moscow (Paras. 12-14).

50X1

18 April 1965

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## I. MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The pattern and pace of Viet Cong military activity remained essentially unchanged over the week end. Incidents were mainly confined to harassing actions against government posts, installations, and New Life Hamlets, as well as to limited sabotage activity against road communications. The most significant incident reported occurred in Darlac Province on 15 April, when the Viet Cong entered two New Life Hamlets and stripped the Popular Force defenders of their arms and communications equipment. Government losses included 112 weapons and two radios; no personnel were reported killed or missing, however.

2. The number of government operations of battalion size or larger in progress increased slightly over the week end to 21. Fifteen operations which were terminated during the period failed to produce any significant results.

3. In Tay Ninh Province, the three-battalion force airlifted in as a follow-up to the 15 April air strike against the Viet Cong War Zone C [redacted] [redacted] has had no success to date in contacting the enemy. Initial official reports note that only a limited number of supplies have been captured or destroyed.

50X1  
50X1

4. ARVN company-size or smaller operations over the week end continued at the same pace. Of the 4,634 actions initiated during the two-day period, only 17 made any contact with the Viet Cong. Except for one action in Binh Long Province, which discovered 10 tons of rice paddy, results were without significance.

5. General Westmoreland has reported that, during a recent visit to South Vietnam's IV Corps Headquarters, he observed an air of increased confidence among both military and civilian officials. He was also told that more intelligence was being received from the people, and that reports were

18 April 1965

I-1

50X1

being received of low Viet Cong morale. The commander of the 7th Division stated that some Viet Cong main force units were apparently moving from his area to III Corps; he speculated that they might plan to conduct operations which would draw back to Saigon the ARVN general reserve forces which have recently scored several successes against the Communists in the II Corps area to the north.

6. According to the press, a Viet Cong terrorist ring has been uncovered in Saigon. The information which led to the arrest of a pedicab driver and the discovery of a cache of arms and explosives was reportedly obtained from a 21-year-old girl detained by Saigon police. The cache was said to include a quantity of TNT, 13 hand grenades, and a bomb fashioned from an artillery shell, as well as six other bombs ranging in size from 2 to 11 pounds. Other members of the ring are being sought by the police.

18 April 1965

I-2


50X1

## II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The Buddhist anti-Communist campaign is quietly continuing. A prayer service in Saigon was held over the week end for a number of monks and lay followers reported to have been slain recently by the Viet Cong. Spokesman for the Buddhist Institute also used the occasion to deny that any Buddhist pressure was involved in the government's suspension of two senior military officers. Last week the Buddhist Institute reportedly warned that monks and nuns engaging in political activity would be considered "estranged" from the Buddhist community.

2. A Catholic priest recently told a US Embassy officer in Saigon that the Catholics tended to regard the suspension of Admiral Cang as an internal naval affair. The priest noted that Cang, although Catholic, had discredited himself by supporting General Khang. He described the relief of Saigon area commander General Dong, however, as part of a "conspiracy" by Generals Ky and Thi, Police Director Colonel Lieu, and the Buddhist Institute. He indicated that the Catholics were still unhappy with current political trends and with the Quat government, but were limiting themselves at present to discreet countermoves rather than considering resort to demonstrations or coup plotting.



50X1

18 April 1965

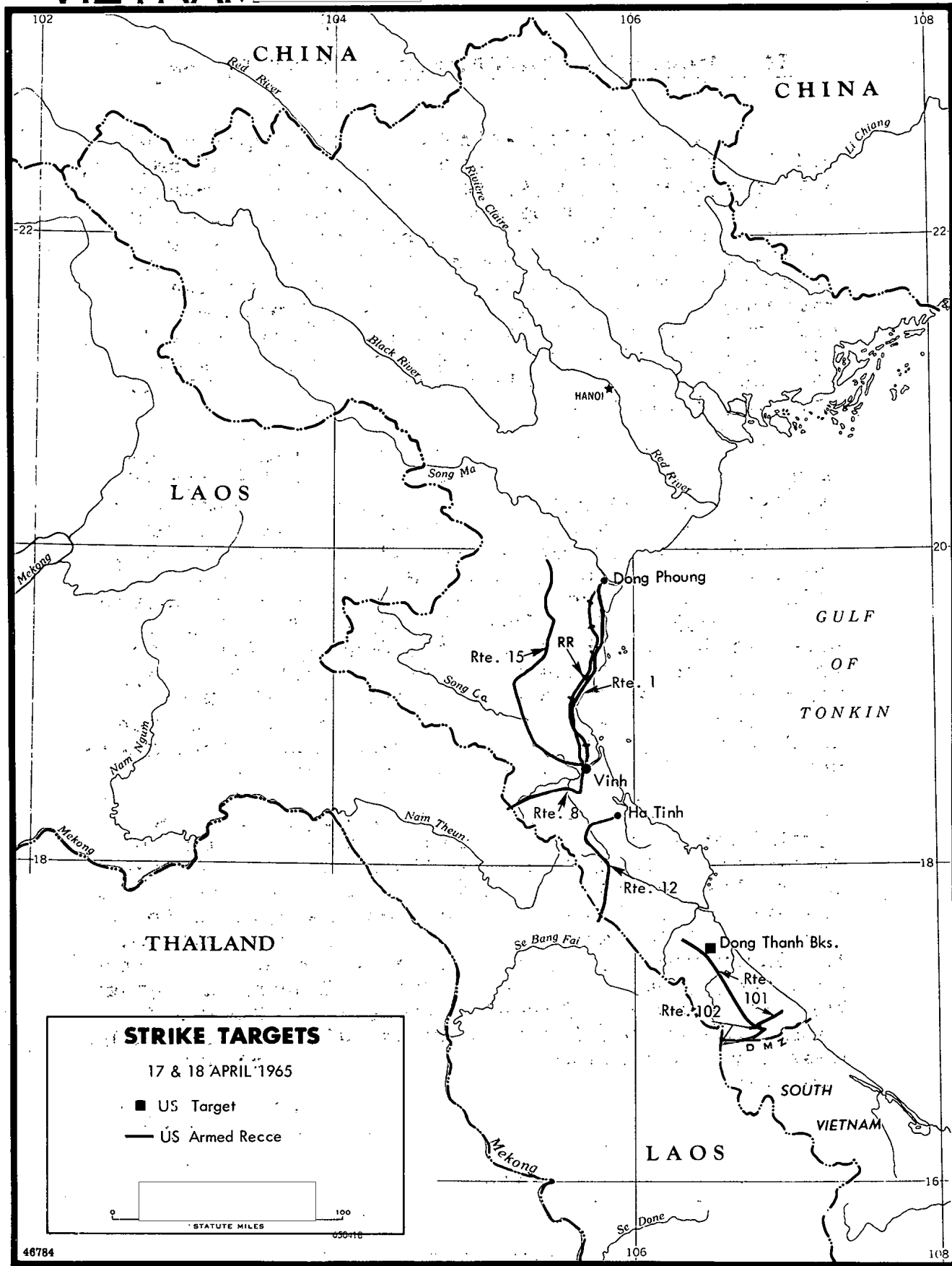
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# NORTH VIETNAM

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. USAF and USN aircraft on 17 April conducted armed reconnaissance missions along Routes 1, 8, 12, and 15 and the rail line from Dong Phuong to Vinh. On 18 April US Navy aircraft performed armed reconnaissance along Routes 101 and 102 and attacked the army barracks at Dong Thanh.

2. Sixteen planes, accompanied by about 45 support aircraft, carried out the 17 April missions. One F-105 was lost. On 18 April three aircraft, accompanied by ten support aircraft, conducted the strikes. All returned safely. No Communist air reaction was reported on either 17 or 18 April.

3. Full results of the strikes on 17 April are not yet available. Preliminary information indicates damage to some of the buildings at Mu Gia Pass. One truck was also destroyed. Navy aircraft attacked 12 boxcars on the rail line between Vinh and Dong Phuong, but the amount of damage is unknown. No vehicles were observed on Route 15. During the strikes on the 18th, no vehicles were sighted on Routes 101 and 102. Damage to the Dong Thanh army barracks is not yet known.

50X1

18 April 1965

III-1

50X1

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. The release of the joint Soviet-DRV communiqué on 17 April constitutes Moscow's and Hanoi's first acknowledgment that a North Vietnamese delegation, headed by party leader Le Duan, had been in Moscow since 10 April. The earlier joint Soviet-DRV statement of 10 February, on the occasion of Premier Kosygin's visit to Hanoi, had asserted that "regular consultations" would be held on "measures which should be taken to strengthen" North Vietnamese defensive capabilities. The just concluded Moscow talks are the first to be publicized since 10 February.

2. The communiqué was highlighted by a cautious, conditional pledge to send Soviet volunteers to North Vietnam if the DRV government requests them. The pledge goes well beyond Brezhnev's ambiguous reference in his 23 March speech to Soviet citizens expressing their readiness to "take part in" the DRV's struggle. The pledge, however, stops well short of committing Soviet volunteers to the fighting in South Vietnam. Hanoi, Peiping, and Pyongyang had earlier pledged volunteers to the Viet Cong if the latter so requested.

50X1

18 April 1965

V-1

50X1

4. The communiqué contained the most authoritative public Soviet references to President Johnson's 7 April speech. While it was critical of the President's speech, the communiqué avoided the vitriolic, personal criticism of the President which appeared in earlier assessments of the speech from Hanoi and Peiping. Instead, the criticisms are more in line with Moscow's propaganda on the speech.

5. There was no call in the communiqué for a Geneva-type conference on Vietnam. However, it stated that it would be "useful to convene the relevant international conferences" to solve the problems of Laos and Cambodia. The Soviets on 8 April had proposed an immediate international conference on Cambodia. Hanoi, as well as Peiping, had already publicly endorsed the Cambodian appeal of 15 March.

6. The leader of the DRV delegation, party first secretary Le Duan, has traditionally been a spokesman of the militant faction of the North Vietnamese regime. He last visited the Soviet Union in early 1964, when the objective of his delegation seemed in part to commit Moscow to a step-up in political and diplomatic pressure against US policy in South Vietnam. DRV Defense Minister Giap was a member of the delegation which signed the 17 April 1965 communiqué. He has usually been associated with moderate party circles in Hanoi, and is clearly the most authoritative spokesman on DRV military needs and affairs.

7. Over the week end, the Asian Communists at the Bandung anniversary celebrations in Indonesia continued their efforts to enlist greater Afro-Asian backing for the Communist side in the Vietnam situation. A series of private meetings was held in Djakarta by the Chinese Communists and North Vietnamese representatives with Indonesian and Cambodian officials, including Sukarno and Sihanouk. The Asian Communists also visited several of the African representatives who are present for the celebrations.

18 April 1965

V-2

50X1

8. In Peiping at a mass rally marking the Bandung anniversary, Chinese politburo member Peng Chen declared that support of the "Vietnamese people's struggle" is the "duty of all Asian-African countries." Peng attempted to give the impression that the Chinese were in the vanguard in offering support, without pledging Peiping to any specific action. He asserted that the Chinese were now offering support "in every way and we will go a step forward in supporting them (the Vietnamese) according to their needs." According to Peng, the Chinese people "are willing to take emergency action to force the US aggressors" out of Vietnam.

9. A similar tough line was taken by another top Chinese politburo member, Teng Hsiao-ping, at a Bandung anniversary banquet in Peiping. Teng declared China ready to support the Vietnamese "no matter what happens and regardless of what price we must pay." Both Teng and Peng, however, carefully emphasized the position of the Vietnamese themselves as being at the "forefront" of the fighting.

10. To help set the stage for the Asian Communist activities at the Bandung anniversary, Hanoi on 16 April released the text of an interview between DRV Premier Pham Van Dong and a correspondent of the Indonesian news agency. In the interview, Dong again denounced the President's speech in Baltimore and reasserted the four-point proposal for a "settlement" of the Vietnam question which was contained in his 8 April speech before the DRV National Assembly. The premier reiterated that his proposal is "the basis for the most correct political solution" of the Vietnam question, and said that acceptance of it will make it possible to "contemplate" the holding of a Geneva-type conference on Vietnam.

11. In a broadcast of excerpts from Pham Van Dong's interview, Peiping radio on 17 April stiffened his proposals somewhat by quoting the premier as saying that they form the only basis for a settlement.

18 April 1965

V-3

50X1

The broadcast omitted the premier's references to the convocation of an international conference on Vietnam. Chinese propaganda had accorded similar handling to Pham Van Dong's speech of 8 April setting forth the proposals to the DRV National Assembly.

12. Pakistani President Ayub told the US ambassador on 15 April that, during his recent visit to Moscow, Soviet leaders in discussing the Vietnamese situation sounded "even more bellicose and defiant" of the US than the Chinese Communist leaders had been a month earlier. However, Ayub expressed the opinion that the difference was more in outward posture than in substance.

13. The Pakistani ambassador to Moscow confirmed to Ambassador Kohler on 17 April that the top Soviet leaders, especially Kosygin, took a "very tough, angry line" with Ayub on US policy toward Vietnam. Kosygin heatedly told Ayub that the US should recognize that the socialist camp also has an exotic weapon arsenal and is prepared to use it if the US persists in using "poison gas." Kosygin also reportedly said that if the war escalates and Chinese Communist territory is violated, the Sino-Soviet alliance would be invoked and the Soviets would "destroy" the US.

14. Kohler believes that, while Kosygin's emotional treatment of the subject certainly reflected the seriousness with which the Soviets regard the Vietnam situation, his statements to Ayub were not so much an indication of Soviet intentions as an effort to "prepare" Ayub for his then scheduled visit to Washington.

18 April 1965

V-4

50X1

**TOP SECRET**

13

**TOP SECRET**